

The Islamic High Culture of the Golden Horde

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Scholars of Islamic civilization like to note that the Arabic word for “civilization” (*madaniya*) is related to the Arabic word for “city” (*madina*). The two concepts were inevitably linked in the Golden Horde as well, except that there a new high culture was created in the new cities of the riverine oases of the steppe zone. Henceforth, at least until the collapse of the Golden Horde, these would co-exist with the traditional centers of high culture in Xorezm, the Crimea, and the Volga-Kama confluence established earlier. The creation of a high culture in newly-established cities such as Saray and New Saray had many requirements that needed to be fulfilled. The first was that a formidable capital investment was required from whatever sources to create the infrastructure and offer the patronage necessary for supporting the development and practice of a high culture. Second, since the ruling Mongol elite was not heir to a significant high culture of its own and assimilated rapidly to the majority Turkophone population, it would have to develop this high culture at a moment when a Turkic high culture was still not fully developed in Western Eurasia or the Middle East. (In this period only the non-Islamic Uyğur literary tradition was fully developed, but that was limited to the Tarim Basin far to the east in present-day Xinjiang.) Finally, the fact that in this part of the medieval world knowledge was to be equated with religious knowledge, it would be necessary to create a new high culture on the basis of one of the great world religions with its own tradition of a high culture. This could only be accomplished by importing or attracting scholars versed in this tradition to its own territory. Even though Islam was not the only religion practiced in the territories of the Golden Horde, it ascended in the early 14th century to the status of a state religion. The Islamic Turkic high culture which developed slowly over the course of the 13th-14th centuries, indeed began to flourish in the mid-14th century, reflects a felicitous conjuncture of several different facts: wealth, urbanization, Turkification, and Islamization.¹

Any consideration of the religious history of the Golden Horde — which is very complicated indeed — must begin with the traditional belief system of the local Turkic population,² that of the newly-arrived Mongols, the later multiplicity of organized world religions competing for official sanction, and finally the rise of Islam to a position as state religion of the Golden Horde. The traditional belief system of the Mongols may be described as animist, so consistent with the other traditional religions of Eurasia in which shamans served as media to invoke the spirits of natural phenomena. Certain aspects of Mongol religion can be seen in the descriptions of the Latin travelers in the 13th century and other sources, for example the purifying nature of fire. There is no evidence that there was any significant influence by the Nestorian Christian Mongols of pre-conquest times on the religious system of the Mongols of the Golden Horde, even though the European powers were mistakenly convinced early on that a great Christian king, Prester John, would be their ally in the east. The xans rapidly adopted

¹ I have explored these issues more fully in my work *The Golden Horde: Economy, Society, and Civilization in Western Eurasia, Thirteenth-Fourteenth Centuries* (Madison: Turko-Tatar Press, in press).

² See D. DeWeese, *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde. Baba Tükles and Conversion to Islam in Historical and Epic Tradition* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), p. 27ff.; and Peter B. Golden, “Religion among the Qıpçaqs of Medieval Eurasia”, *Central Asiatic Journal* 42 (1998), pp. 180-227. DeWeese offers a detailed treatment of some of the sources that I have cited below. I am in disagreement with some of the approaches offered in his work, to which I will return at the end of this essay.

various organized world religions in the Golden Horde and the other states of the Mongol World Empire; this phenomenon is most in evidence in the Il-xanate in Iran.³

The Golden Horde, like the rest of the Mongol World Empire, was tolerant of a variety of organized religions. There was no policy directed against Christians, even once Islam became the state religion under Özbek Xan. A variety of sources for the 13th-14th centuries, including translations of the *yarluqs* of the Golden Horde rulers as well as the Russian chronicles (compiled, of course, by clerics) relate that the Orthodox Church was exempt from taxation.⁴ There is also significant evidence to suggest that early members of the ruling elite of the Golden Horde and their families came under the sway of Christianity, as will be seen below. Below the level of the ruling elite, there was a significant Christian population in the cities of the Golden Horde including both the local population and Christian clerics as well as merchants from abroad. The Kipchaks in the southern steppe were Christians in this period.⁵ Ibn Baṭṭūṭa also indicates that in addition to Muslim Mongols and As (Alans), the inhabitants of Saray also included Christian Kipchaks, Cherkes, Russians, and Greeks (*Rūm*).⁶ On the other hand, there is only limited evidence concerning Jews in the territories of the Golden Horde.⁷ As for Buddhism, the Mongols in the east became Buddhists too late for it to have any decisive impact in the West, for which reason there are only traces of Buddhist relics in the territories of the patrimony of Batu.⁸

Orthodox, Catholic, Armenian, Nestorian, and other Christian traditions were present in this territory and were competing for faithful from many of the same towns and cities. The Christian missionary activity emanating from the Crimea can be seen thanks in part to the famous *Codex Cumanicus* compiled by Italian and German missionaries in the Crimea, which is a handbook of the Cumans' Turkic language (including translations of religious material) for use in their pursuit of new converts.⁹ The importance and success of Christianity in the territories of the Golden Horde can be seen from the series of official Christian institutions established there. The Orthodox bishopric of Saray was created in the 1260s and continued to exist through the end of the 15th century, though it does not seem that a bishop was always in residence in Saray throughout this entire period. This institution can be studied in some detail since the Russian sources offer extensive information on the bishops of Saray.¹⁰ In the second

³ See the account of Benedict the Pole in *Mission to Asia*, trans. A Nun of Stanbrook Abbey, ed. C. Dawson (London, 1955/Toronto, 1980), p. 80; and W. Heissig, trans. G. Samuel, *The Religions of Mongolia* (Berkeley, 1980), pp. 6-23.

⁴ See M.D. Priselkov, *Xanskie yarliki russkim mitropolitam* (Petrograd, 1916); Grigor of Akanc', ed. trans. Robert P. Blake and Richard N. Frye, "History of the Nation of the Archers (The Mongols)", *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 12 (1949), pp. 269-399, especially p. 315; Kirakos of Gancak, trans. L. A. Xanlarian, *Istoriia Armenii*, Pamyatniki pis'mennosti Vostoka 53 (Moscow, 1976), p. 222; Nikon/Zenkovsky: iii, 34-35, 54; J. Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia* (Cambridge, 1981/Crestwood, 1989), p. 45; T.T. Allsen, *Mongol Imperialism. The Policies of the Grand Qan Möngke in China, Russia, and the Islamic Lands, 1251-1259* (Berkeley, 1987), pp. 121-122.

⁵ Ibn Baṭṭūṭa/Gibb, ii: 470.

⁶ Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Rihla*, trans. H.A.R. Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, A.D. 1325-1354*, i-iii, Works Issued by the Hakluyt Society, II, 110, 117, and 141 (Cambridge, 1958-1971), ii: 515-517. See also M.D. Poluboyarinova, *Russkie lyudi v Zolotoy Orde* (Moscow, 1978).

⁷ Ibn Baṭṭūṭa/Gibb, ii: 480.

⁸ See N.N. Poppe, "Zolotoordinskaya rukopis' na bereste", *Sovetskoe vostokovedenie* 2 (1941).

⁹ See *Codex Cumanicus*, ed. G. Kuun, Budapest Oriental Reprints B1 (Budapest, 1880/1981); L. Ligeti, "Prolegomena to the Codex Cumanicus", *Acta Orientalia Hungarica* 35 (1981), pp. 1-54 (included in the reprint of *Codex Cumanicus*/Kuun); and P.B. Golden, "Codex Cumanicus", *Central Asian Monuments*, ed. H.B. Paksoy (Istanbul, 1992), pp. 33-63.

¹⁰ On the Orthodox bishops of Saray see B. Spuler, *Die Goldene Horde. Die Mongolen in Russland, 1223-1502* (Wiesbaden, 1965²), p. 231; Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia* (index under "Saray").

half of the 13th century the Franciscans also received privileges and protection for their work in the territories of the Golden Horde. By the end of the 14th century there were Franciscan covents and residences wherever merchants traveled, including Soldaya, Kaffa, Solğat (Qırım) and Qırq-yer in the Crimea (later also at Cimbalò/Balaklava and Qarasu) and along the coastal towns of the Kuban River and Abxazia. The Franciscans were in Saray itself by 1286 and in Ükek and Bulğar (the likely identification of *Veler*) by 1320. Other sites of Franciscan activity included Astraxan, Aqsaray (?), Ürgenç, and points east on the road to China. Dominicans were active in Kaffa, in Tana, and in other sites.¹¹ The Catholic administration organized this area into the provinces of Vospro, Saray, and Matrega, with numerous bishoprics and an archbishopric in Saray. In many cases the purpose of these institutions was to promote missionary activity and serve the needs of itinerant merchants rather than to cater to the needs of a large community of believers.¹²

The first high-ranking member of the Çingisid elite of the Golden Horde to express an interest in an organized world religion was probably Sartaq, since there was a belief that Sartaq was a Christian. This was also seen as the pretext for the possible murder of the first and probably only Christian xan of the Golden Horde,¹³ since it was Islam that would achieve the status of dominant religion in this state. The first future ruler of the Golden Horde to accept Islam was Berke, and a number of scholars have already described the role played by the Central Asian Sufi leader Sayf ad-Dīn Bāxarzī of the Kubravīya order in this conversion.¹⁴ Of course this was not the beginning of Islam in the territories of the Golden Horde, since Volga Bulgaria had already converted to Islam by the early 10th century, and of course Xwarezm, which formed an integral part of the territories of the Golden Horde, was another important bastion of Islam from the pre-Mongol period.

It appears the rise of Islam as a political force and as a source of cultural inspiration in the Golden Horde took a very twisted path in subsequent years. It is possible that one of the subsequent rulers of the Golden Horde in the 14th century retired to a life of mystic contemplation after converting, if he was not actually killed. At the same time that certain sources portray some of the xans of the Golden Horde after Berke as distinctly uninterested in Islam, Christian sources portray them as interested in Islam. While it is difficult to clarify the contradictions in the sources for the second half of the 13th century, it is clear that Islam finally achieved the status of state religion under Özbek Xan. Although Özbek conducted a campaign against either animists or Buddhist priests, there is no evidence to suggest that he began any campaigns against the "People of the Book", as Muslims view Jews and Christians.¹⁵ The story of

¹¹ On the Catholic clergy see J. Richard, *La Papauté et les missions d'orient au Moyen-Age (XIII^e-XV^e siècles)* (Rome, 1977), pp. 86-97, especially 94-95.

¹² See Richard, *La Papauté et les missions d'orient*, pp. 230-255.

¹³ Kirakos of Gancak/Xanlarian, pp. 219, 226; Richard, *La Papauté et les missions d'orient*, p. 77ff. But cf. the account of William of Rubruck, "The Journey of William of Rubruck", *Mission to Asia*, trans. A Nun of Stanbrook Abbey, ed. C. Dawson (London, 1955/Toronto, 1980), pp. 123, 149-150, according to whom Sartaq was not a Christian and in fact seemed to hold them in derision.

¹⁴ J. Richard, "La Conversion de Berke et les débuts de l'islamisation de la Horde d'Or", *Revue des études islamiques* 35 (1967), pp. 173-184; I. Vásáry, "History and Legend in Berke Khan's Conversion to Islam", *Aspects of Altaic Civilization III*, ed. D. Sinor, Uralic and Altaic Series 145 (Bloomington, 1990), pp. 230-252; M.I. Waley, "A Kubrawī Manual of Sufism: The Fuṣūṣ al-ādāb of Yaḥyā Bākhārī", *The Legacy of Mediaeval Persian Sufism*, ed. L. Lewisohn (New York, 1992), pp. 289-310; and D. DeWeese, *Islamization and Native Religion*, p. 83ff.

¹⁵ Özbek is reported to have killed a number of emirs and most of the *baxşıs* and sorcerers (*sahara*) upon taking the throne. Mufaḍḍal, *An-nahc as-sadīd wa-d-durr al-farīd fīmā ba`da tāriḫ Ibn `Amīd*, ed.-trans. V.G. Tizengauzen, *Sbornik materialov otnosyaščixsya k istorii Zolotoy ordī, i: Izvleçeniya iz soçineniy arabskix* (St. Petersburg, 1884), pp.186/197. The term *baxşı* is understood to mean "lama" by to some scholars, though in the Later Golden Horde this term referred to the scribes who wrote down the

flourishing religious life in the Golden Horde under Özbek Khan is really the story of the integration of the Golden Horde into Islamic religious culture, both as a learned religion as well as on the level of popular Islam, and into a cosmopolitan civilization. Again, we know much of this thanks to the detailed unique information offered by the great traveler Ibn Baṭṭūṭa.

During his travels through the territory of the Golden Horde circa January 1333, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa found mosques, religious judges, and Sufi hospices (*zāwiya*) to be ubiquitous. He found a mosque in Kaffa; the town of Qırım, where he stayed in a hospice led by the sheykh Zāda al-Xurāsānī, had a chief religious judge (*qādī*) of the Ḥanafī legal school as well as religious judge of the Şāfi`ī legal school. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa also met a number of learned scholars, including a jurist and professor who was an As (Alan), in addition to the preacher (*xaṭīb*) reading the sermon and the symbolically important blessing in the name of the caliph on Fridays in the congregational mosque. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa mentions a mosque built in Qırım in 1288 with the aid of the Egyptian ruler Baybars, but we also know of two other mosques, including the congregational mosque of Qırım that Özbek had built in 1314.¹⁶ In Azaq (Azov) Ibn Baṭṭūṭa found a religious judge and students, and he witnessed recitations of the Qur`ān followed by a sermon and blessings. There was also other kinds of religious singing in Arabic which were then translated into Persian as well as into Turkic. In Māçar the traveler stayed at the hospice of a pious sheykh from `Iraq and also visited a mosque with a preacher from Buxara.¹⁷ In Sarayçuq he saw a hospice belonging to a pious Turk of great age called Ata and where he also met a religious judge. Later in *Kāṭ* he also met a religious judge there together with the pious and devout sheykh Maḥmūd al-Xīwaqī.¹⁸

In the great traveler's description Saray Berke was an exceptional city for its religious life as well. Saray had 13 mosques for Friday congregational prayers, including one for the Şāfi`ī school, and there were many more smaller mosques. He met the Şāfi`ī scholar Şadr ad-Dīn Sulaymān al-Lakzī (of the Lezgi of Dağistan), the Mālikī scholar Şams ad-Dīn al-Miṣrī, an Egyptian, the religious judge of Saray, Badr ad-Dīn al-A`rac, who was considered one of the best in his profession, and other religious scholars. Every Friday, the Muslim day of rest, Özbek Khan would visit the hospice of the learned congregational preacher (*imām*) Nu`mān ad-Dīn al-Xwārizmī, "one of the eminent shaikhs and a man of fine character, generous in soul, of exceeding humility but also of exceeding severity towards the possessors of this world's goods". Although this sheykh would humble himself before poor brethren, the needy, and travelers, his conduct towards Özbek was the opposite. On the other hand, we might note from our modern perspective that the same individual also presented Ibn Baṭṭūṭa with a Turkish slaveboy.¹⁹

In Xwarezm the great traveler found a great center of Islamic religion and learning which neither Saray Batu nor the more recently-established city of Saray Berke could possibly rival. Here Ibn Baṭṭūṭa visited the congregational mosque and the college; this college and its dependencies were endowed by the great emir of Özbek named Qutluq Temür, and the mosque was built by his wife, the pious *xatun* Turābak. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa and his traveling companions stayed in another newly-built college. He describes meeting a series of scholars of the Mu`tazilite school of Sunnī theology. Since Özbek Khan and the great emir Qutluq Temür were adherents of orthodox Sunnī Islam, these scholars did not make open display of their adherence to the Mu`tazilite school. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa also describes the unique custom in Xwarezm of alerting the

correspondence. See M.A. Usmanov, *Jalovannië akti Djuçieva Ulusa XIV-XVI vv.* (Kazan, 1979), pp. 125-131.

¹⁶ Ibn Baṭṭūṭa/Gibb, ii: 470-473 and 472 n. See A.L. Yakobson, *Srednevekoviy Krım. Oçerki istorii i istorii material'noy kulturi* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1964), pp. 106-108 for a discussion of the mosque and medrese of Özbek Khan in Solğat (Qırım or later Eski Qırım), its floorplan, and the inscription of its builder.

¹⁷ Ibn Baṭṭūṭa/Gibb, ii: 475-481.

¹⁸ Ibn Baṭṭūṭa/Gibb, iii: 539, 549-550.

¹⁹ Ibn Baṭṭūṭa/Gibb, ii: 515-517.

Muslim inhabitants to the approaching hour for prayer. There was a whip in each mosque for beating any person who did not attend communal prayers, and that person was also fined 5 dinars, which was used to help maintain the mosque or to feed the poor. This was considered an ancient custom with an uninterrupted tradition. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa also described the hospice built over the tomb of sheykh Nacm ad-Dīn al-Kubrā, who was killed during the Mongol invasions and was later venerated by the Kubraviya Sufi order. Food was supplied to all travelers there, and its sheykh, Sayf ad-Dīn b. ʿAṣab, was teacher of the college as well as one of the principal citizens of Xwarezm. There was another hospice whose sheykh, Calāl ad-Din as-Samarqandī, had spent one or more years in the holy lands of Mecca or Medina. Four miles from the city was the tomb of the learned *imām* Abū l-Qāsim Maḥmūd ibn ʿUmar al-Zamaxṣarī.

Ibn Baṭṭūṭa also described various details of his meeting with the religious judge Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar al-Bakrī, known by the title of *ṣadr*, and his assistants. This judge was an individual endowed with great wealth and landed property whose sister-in-law was married to Qutluq Temür. His house was furnished with rich carpets, cloth hanging on the walls, and vessels of silver-gilt and ʿIraqi glass in the large number of niches built into the walls. He also mentions that there are a number of admonitory preachers and revivalists in the city, and that the preacher (*xatīb*) at the Friday services, Mawlānā Zayn ad-Dīn al-Maqdisī is one of the four greatest preachers that he has ever heard. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa further describes that it was one of the regular practices of the emir that the religious judge visit his audience hall daily. One of the great emirs sits there accompanied by eight of the great emirs and sheykhhs of the Turks called *yarğuçis* (*argucī*). People with disputes within the jurisdiction of the religious law (i.e., the *ṣarīʿa*) have their disputes settled by the religious judge, and the emirs settle the other disputes.²⁰

There are very important insights to be gained from the information for which Ibn Baṭṭūṭa is a unique source. We might conclude that in Xwarezm and in Bulğar (the latter probably not visited by Ibn Baṭṭūṭa), Islamic devotion continued—we might say from the perspective of the 1330s without serious disruption—from pre-Mongol times, though the Mongol conquests helped create important martyrs, especially among the leaders of Sufi orders in Xwarezm and elsewhere in Central Asia. It is difficult to know how old the Islamic infrastructure in the centers visited by the great traveler in the North Caucasus foreland and the Crimea might have been. What was spectacular, however, was the rapid development of orthodox Islamic institutions in Saray within the space of decades or possibly even just years. Equally spectacular by the time of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's visit was the full participation in religious life by the highest levels of the ruling elite, including Özbek Xan's humiliation before an ascetic religious leader. Nor should we underestimate the role of the Sufi orders in promoting Islam among broader segments of the population throughout the religious frontier areas of the Golden Horde. As in the conversions of Berke and Özbek to Islam, the Sufi leaders must have participated in missionary activity among broader segments of society as they did in other periods. Perhaps it is already possible to speak of a missionary Islam propagated by Sufi orders in the territories of the Golden Horde in the time of Berke Xan. There can be no question that there was such a missionary Islam by the time of Özbek Xan, since the hospices described by Ibn Baṭṭūṭa were by their very nature intended to serve as nodes in an Islamic religious and missionary network throughout the territory of the patrimony of Batu.

Özbek Xan, Qutluq Temür, and other leading officials and their families invested huge sums of money to establish mosques, religious colleges, and the complexes usually associated with them. They or some other individuals must also have contributed heavily to pious foundations (Arabic *waqf*, pl. *awqāf*), endowments whose income (often controlled by members of the family of the endower for their own gain) would support and maintain these

²⁰ Ibn Baṭṭūṭa/Gibb, iii: 541-550. On the title *ṣadr* see R.W. Bulliet, "The Shaikh Al-Islām and the Evolution of Islamic Society", *Studia Islamica* 35 (1972), pp. 53-67.

important Islamic institutions on a continuing basis, just like anywhere else in the Islamic world.²¹ In Xwarezm participation in religious life even extended to marital alliances between the ruling Çingisid elite and the religious elite, which may have been seen as an important new form of legitimacy supplementing the Çingisid claim to sovereignty.

It is also clear that there was a tremendous investment in a newly-expanded religious class to staff the newly-built institutions of the new cities. A large proportion of the religious scholars identified by Ibn Baṭṭūṭa had immigrated to the Golden Horde from other centers of Islamic civilization in the Middle East and elsewhere as indicated by their names (the *nisba* adjective indicated geographical origin, Miṣrī for example indicating an Egyptian origin). In fact, the Golden Horde was home to both Sunnis and Shi`is, and to all four orthodox Islamic legal schools representing Islamic legal practices from around the world. (Today the Sunni Turks of Western Eurasia, including Anatolia, follow the Ḥanafī legal school; only the Azerbaijanis of the Transcaucasus and Iran are Shi`is, consistent with their Iranian cultural environment.) This reflects the close ties between the capitals of the Golden Horde and the major centers of traditional Islamic learning throughout the Islamic world of that time and that representatives of all these different groups came to the Golden Horde. This is yet one more indication of what the vast wealth of the Golden Horde elite could achieve in a relatively short period of time.

Not all of the scholars, however, came from abroad. Some of these religious scholars were from indigenous ethnic groups such as the Iranian As (Alans) or from the traditional pre-Mongol Islamic centers of the Golden Horde, primarily Xwarezm. Although the Golden Horde capital cities Saray Batu and Saray Berke obviously had not had earlier institutions devoted to training Islamic clergy, by the time of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's visit in 1333 some of the religious scholars of the Golden Horde could have been trained in Saray, whether the sources mention separate religious colleges or not. After all, the mosques as centers of religious life led by scholars could have served this purpose equally well. Certainly training was in progress in some of the other southern centers of the Crimea and North Caucasus foreland that he visited. Thus, the rulers not only created cities with their steadily increasing wealth, they endowed buildings dedicated to religious practice and learning and filled them with Islamic scholars. Even the new urban centers of the Golden Horde, including the capital cities, could now claim to be cosmopolitan centers of Islamic learning with the ability to preserve and teach Islamic knowledge in order to reproduce a religious learned class as well as to disseminate this knowledge to the new converts, a process which as Bulliet has shown could take generations.²²

What has this enormous investment in cities, an Islamic religious infrastructure, and human capital contributed to world civilization, and what is there of this contribution, if any, that can be called characteristic of the Golden Horde? It is true that the destruction and slaughter accompanying the Mongol conquests caused a serious disruption in intellectual life, perhaps permanently in some areas. At the same time, grievous misconceptions have clouded the general view of high culture in the Golden Horde over the entire period of the 13th-14th centuries and beyond.²³ The only satisfactory answer for the period through the end of the 14th

²¹ For Central Asia in a later period see R.D. McChesney, *Waqf in Central Asia. Four Hundred Years in the History of a Muslim Shrine, 1480-1889* (Princeton, 1991); and M.E. Subtelny, "A Timurid Educational and Charitable Foundation", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 111 (1991), pp. 38-61.

²² R.W. Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period. An Essay in Quantitative History* (Cambridge, 1979).

²³ The standard works on the Golden Horde, including Spuler, have generally remained silent on the issue of high culture. The following statement reflects a particularly high degree of misinformation: "The Mongols were surely writing in Arabic in the fourteenth century—literature, poetry, religious expositions—but unfortunately none has survived. Tatar writers in the fifteenth century began producing literature in a new dialect, Chagatai Turkic. Certainly it was not the poverty of the Golden Horde's culture that kept Russian culture free of Mongol influences." See C. Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde. The*

century is that the Golden Horde made significant contributions to the continuation of traditions of civilization that had already existed in its territories, to the flow of knowledge between its own centers and centers outside of its own boundaries, and to the development of new traditions of civilization in its own territories. This can only be understood properly, however, if we endeavour to understand the sources for the civilization of the Golden Horde and place the Golden Horde within the appropriate context of cultural development in both time and space.

I have already noted that knowledge in this period was equated with religious knowledge, and that we must look to the religious centers for production of all categories of works relating to high culture. It is likely that most or all of the centers of sedentary Islamic civilization in the Crimea, the North Caucasus foreland, the Volga-Kama confluence, and Xorezm described earlier continued a role that was established sometime before the Mongol conquests. Pritsak has pointed out that the Crimea has served without interruption as a center for many civilizations in many languages, which is why Cyril and Methodius, among others, went there in the 9th century.²⁴ It is difficult to be sure just how active the centers of the North Caucasus were in the period immediately preceding the Mongol conquests compared to the active religious and cultural life there in the 14th century. Volga Bulgaria had an active intellectual life in the 10th-12th centuries as reported by a number of sources; this is the center most likely to have suffered a major cultural setback as a result of the Mongol conquests.²⁵ Xwarezm, on the other hand, continued as an important center of Islamic learning with probably only minor interruption.

Before the 13th century Arabic was the major language of Islamic civilization (the traditional periodization divides Arabic literature into a so-called Golden Age lasting 750-1055 and a so-called Silver Age lasting 1055-1258);²⁶ a Persian high literature came into its own only in the 11th-12th centuries.²⁷ While Arabic was used as a literary language in Bulğar in the north before the 13th century,²⁸ Persian was more important in the southern areas of the territory of the future of the Golden Horde; after all, the peoples of Central Asia spoken Iranian languages before they became speakers of Turkic languages. As is clear from a variety of sources, during the 13th-14th centuries important works would continue to be produced in Arabic and in Persian on the territories of the Golden Horde. On the other hand, there was only a limited tradition of original works written in Islamic Turkic languages before the 13th-14th centuries. The first Islamic Turkic work, the major work of the so-called "Qaraxanid" literature of Balasağun (and Kaşğâr), was written only in the 1060s continuing the pre-Islamic traditions of the Turkic-speaking Uyğurs of this same region. There were only a few additional works written

Mongol Impact on Medieval Russian History (Bloomington, 1985), p. 123. On the other hand, the archeologist Fedorov-Davıdov has shown at least an awareness of the existence of an Islamic Turkic literature in the Golden Horde. See G.A. Fyodorov-Davydov [G.A. Fedorov-Davıdov], *The Culture of the Golden Horde Cities*, British Archeological Reports, International Series 198 (Oxford, 1984); and G.A. Fedorov-Davydov, *Städte der Goldenen Horde an der unteren Wolga*, Materialien zur Allgemeinen und Vergleichenden Archäologie 11 (Munich, 1984).

²⁴ O. Pritsak, "The Role of the Bosphorus Kingdom and Late Hellenism as the Basis for the Medieval Cultures of the Territories North of the Black Sea", *The Mutual Effects of the Islamic and Judeo-Christian Worlds: The East European Pattern*, ed. A. Ascher et al. (Brooklyn, 1979), pp. 3-21.

²⁵ On Volga Bulgarian authors cited by Ibn Fađlān, Ğarnāṭī, and other sources see *Tatar ädäbiyatı tarixi*, i (Kazan, 1984), pp. 84-96.

²⁶ See H.A.R. Gibb, *Arabic Literature. An Introduction* (Oxford, 1963²).

²⁷ See Jan Rypka et alia, ed. Karl Jahn, *History of Iranian Literature* (Dordrecht, 1968).

²⁸ See for example *Tatar ädäbiyatı tarixi*, i, pp. 84-96; A. Róna-Tas and S. Fodor, *Epigraphica bulgarica*, *Studia Uralo-Altaica* 1 (Szeged, 1973), pp. 38-40; A.G. Muxamadiev, *Bulgaro-tatarskaya monetnaya sistema*, pp. 22-40.

anywhere in Eurasia, including Anatolia, in a Turkic language using the Arabic script during the 12th century. The collected wisdom of the Central Asian Sufi poet Ahmed Yesevi, later known as the *Divan-i hikmet*, goes back ultimately to the 12th century, as may a few other works. The dating of another work from Central Asia, Ahmed Yükeki's didactic composition entitled the *Atabet ül-haqaiq*, is not certain, though it may also have been written by before the 13th century. It is clear that there was as yet no firmly-established tradition of an Islamic Turkic literary language in the territories of the Golden Horde at the time of its establishment.

The core group of the Çingisid ruling elite that came to the Volga River spoke a language that we call Mongolian, though this is to oversimplify the complex linguistic situation in Inner Asia in the 12th century and the interplay between speakers of languages belonging to the Mongolian, Turkic, and other families. There are very few examples of written Mongolian from the patrimony of Batu in the 13th-14th centuries. There are references in Arabic sources to documents having been written in Mogolī, but there is a debate over whether this meant in the Mongolian language or documents written in some other language in the Mongolian script (such as Uyğur, from which the Mongolian script is derived). All the edicts and diplomatic correspondence collectively known as *yarlıqs* survive in original Turkic versions only from the end of the 14th century (1398).²⁹ More significantly, it seems that the translated documents from the 13th-14th centuries were in all likelihood based on a Turkic original. Other references in the sources suggest that the ruling elite of the Golden Horde must have Turkified rather quickly, since they were surrounded by and intermarrying with Turkic speakers.

What is less well understood, however, is that beyond the *yarlıqs*, more than one Islamic Turkic literary language emerged or developed in the territories of the Golden Horde over the 13th-14th centuries. The first of these that I would like to discuss briefly is Volga Bulgarian, an usual written language known only from Arabic-script funerary inscriptions found at the confluence of the Volga and Kama rivers.³⁰ While the Arabic language had been used on coins minted in Volga Bulgaria as early as the 10th century C.E., the earliest funerary inscriptions in Volga Bulgarian date only from the 13th century.³¹ The earliest tombstone in the city of Bulğar itself dates from 1271, while the last ones date from 1356.³² There are no further funerary inscriptions nor other datable written monuments of the Volga Bulgarian language after this date. The few Turkic funerary inscriptions found in the Middle Volga region after 1357-1358 are written in Standard Turkic.³³ In addition to Volga Bulgarian (a language whose

²⁹ For translations into Russian see Priselkov, *Xanskie yarlıki russkim mitropolitam*; and "Yarlıki tatarskix xanov moskovskim mitropolitam (kratkoe sobranie)", ed. A.A. Zimin, *Pamyatniki russkogo prava*, iii, (Moscow, 1955), pp. 463-491. For references to the Turkic originals see the references in A. Bennigsen et al., *Le Khanat de Crimée dans les Archives du Musée du Palais de Topkapı* (Paris-The Hague, 1978), pp. 405-409; and Usmanov, *Jalovannië akti Djuçieva Ulusa*, pp. 299-316; to which should be added I. Vásáry, "A Contract of the Crimean Khan Mängli Girây and the Inhabitants of Qırq-yer from 1478/79", *Central Asiatic Journal* 26 (1982), pp. 289-300; and S. Muhamedyarov and I. Vásáry, "Two Kazan Tatar Edicts (Ibrahim's and Sahib Girey's Yarlıks)", *Between the Danube and the Caucasus. A Collection of Papers Concerning Oriental Sources on the History of the Peoples of Central and South-Eastern Europe*, ed. Gy. Kara, Oriental Sources on the History of the Peoples of South-Eastern and Central Europe 4 (Budapest, 1987), pp. 181-216.

³⁰ On these inscriptions see Róna-Tas and Fodor, *Epigraphica bulgarica*; and F.S. Xakimzyanov, *Yazik èpitañiy Voljskix Bulgar* (Moscow, 1978); *Èpigrafiçeskie pamyatniki Voljskoy Bulgarii i ix yazik* (Moscow, 1987).

³¹ See Róna-Tas and Fodor *Epigraphica bulgarica*, pp. 38-40, on the dating of Arabic-script inscriptions in this area. See also Muxamadiev, *Bulgaro-tatarskaya monetnaya sistema*, pp. 22-40 on Volga Bulgarian coinage.

³² D.G. Muxametşin and F.S. Xakimzyanov, *Èpigrafiçeskie pamyatniki goroda Bulgara* (Kazan, 1987), pp. 120.

³³ See for example the two inscriptions dated 1382 and 1399 in Xakimzyanov, *Èpigrafiçeskie pamyatniki Voljskoy Bulgarii*, nos. 18, 19.

closest modern relative is Chuvash, meaning that it is strongly divergent from the other Standard Turkic languages),³⁴ there were also funerary inscriptions in a Standard Turkic dialect which may be considered an ancestor of modern Kazan Tatar in this same area.³⁵ Xakimzyanov has considered that Volga Bulgarian, which ceased to be a written language after 1358, may have served the function of a sacred language that may not have been spoken by this late date.³⁶ Considering these various arguments, I have suggested that Volga Bulgarian came to a sudden end as a result of the Black Death.³⁷ The important point for our discussion here, however, is the use of one Islamic Turkic written language documented in Volga Bulgaria as early as 1271, and the introduction of a second one over the next century. These funerary inscriptions reflect greater wealth from commerce, perhaps greater technical skill, and the cultural ties of Volga Bulgaria to the rest of the Arabic-speaking Islamic world, since parts of the inscriptions are in Arabic. This is another one of the innovations of the Mongol period in the sphere of Islamic Turkic written languages that should be considered by historians.

More important from the point of view of the development of a high culture is the production of a number of belletristic and religious works in an Islamic Turkic written language (or languages, as some linguists would insist) in the territories of the Golden Horde.³⁸ These works allow us to speak of a literature of the Golden Horde written in an indigenous language representing the development of a literary language beyond the levels of the 12th century. This language has been described variously by Turkologists as the language of the Golden Horde, the language of Xwarezm, or by other terms. Works from earlier in the 14th century include Rabġuzi's *Qısas ül-enbiya'* (“Tales of the Prophets”)³⁹ and the *Mu`in ül-murid*.⁴⁰

³⁴ Róna-Tas and Fodor, *Epigraphica bulgarica*, pp. 38-40; and Xakimzyanov, *Yazık épitaftıy Voljskix Bulgar*, pp. 5-24. On the relationship between Volga Bulgarian and Chuvash see also A. Róna-Tas, *Bevezetés a csuvas nyelv ismeretébe* (Budapest, 1978), pp. 13-123, 1982: 113-169.

³⁵ See Xakimzyanov *Épigrafiçeskie pamyatniki Voljskoy Bulgarii*, pp. 5-15. For a map of the distribution of both kinds of inscriptions see Xakimzyanov *Yazık épitaftıy Voljskix Bulgar*, p. 21.

³⁶ See the discussion in D.G. Muxametşın and F.S. Xakimzyanov, *Épigrafiçeskie pamyatniki goroda Bulgara*, pp. 120-126, especially 123; and Xakimzyanov, *Épigrafiçeskie pamyatniki Voljskoy Bulgarii*, pp. 5-15, especially 14.

³⁷ See U. Schamiloglu, “The End of Volga Bulgarian”, *Varia Eurasistica. Festschrift für Professor András Róna-Tas* (Szeged, 1991), pp. 157-163; and “Preliminary Remarks on the Role of Disease in the History of the Golden Horde”, *Central Asian Survey* 12:4 (1993), pp. 447-457. See *The Golden Horde: Economy, Society, and Civilization in Western Eurasia, Thirteenth-Fourteenth Centuries*, Chapter 9 for a more detailed discussion of the effects of the Black Death.

³⁸ I only need refer the reader to standard treatments or any of the standard handbooks such as A. Bombaci, trans. I. Mélikoff, *Histoire de la littérature turque* (Paris, 1968); Z.V. Togan, “Zentralasiatische türkische Literatur. II: Die islamische Zeit”, *Turkologie*, Handbuch der Orientalistik, ed. B. Spuler, I, v/1 (Leiden-Köln, 1963), pp. 229-249; or J. Eckmann, “Die kiptschakische Literatur. I: Die Literatur von Chwarezm und der Goldenen Horde”, *Philologiae Turcicae Fundamenta*, ii, ed. P.N. Boratov (Wiesbaden, 1964), pp. 275-296. See also the English translation of Bombaci's work by Kathleen R.F. Griffin-Burrill (Madison: Turko-Tatar Press, in press).

³⁹ See now Rabġuzi, *The Stories of the Prophets. Qısas al-anbiyā', An Eastern Turkish Version*, ed. H.E. Boeschoten et alia (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

⁴⁰ An edition of this work has been announced by Prof. András Bodrogligeti.

Works from later in the century include the romantic poem *Xusrev u Şirin*,⁴¹ Xorezmi's romantic poem *Mahabbetname* (or *Muhabbetname*),⁴² and the religious treatise *Nehc ül-feradis*.⁴³

Certain of these works as well as others in other languages are clear evidence of patronage of literature by the ruling elite of the Golden Horde, assuming as I think we may that dedication is to be equated with patronage. After all, this process no different from the endowment of religious complexes was essential to the productivity of littérateurs. Rabğuzi's *Qısas ül-enbiya'* is a collection of stories concerning the prophets up through Muḥammad and other early Islamic figures composed around 1310 in Ribat-i Oğuz in Türkistan for a local bey Nasirüddin Toqbuğa. The *Mu`in ül-murid* was a short religious work composed in Ürgenç in 1313. The contents of this work reveal it to have been intended for aspirants in a Sufi order because of its heavy emphasis on the practice of mystical Islam.

The earliest major work to be connected with the court of the Golden Horde was Qutb's *Xusrev ü Şirin* ("Chosroe and Shirin") dedicated to Tımbek Xan (r. 1341-1342, who is described as the ruler of the "White Horde" as described in the Introduction) and his wife Melike xatun.⁴⁴ Although modern Tatar scholars have gone through great defiances of logic to explain how Tımbek could have been in the White Horde (which they took to mean the eastern patrimony of Orda), a recognition of the simple fact that the patrimony of Coçi or Batu was never called the Golden Horde allows us to recognize the simple fact that this work was written for the ruler in New Saray.⁴⁵ Xorezmi's *Mahabbetname* ("The Book of Love") was written on the banks of the Sır Derya (or the Azov) in 1353 and dedicated to one Muhammed Xocabek.⁴⁶ The circumstances surrounding the composition of religious treatise *Nehc ül-feradis*, sub-titled in Turkic "The Clear Path to Heaven", are more complicated. At any rate it does not appear to have a dedication, in part because it was a pious religious work. It is worth examining *Xusräv ü Şirin* and *Nehc ül-feradis* in somewhat greater depth below as classic representatives of the high culture of the Golden Horde.

The romantic poem *Xusräv ü Şirin* is a reworking of the famous romantic poem Xusrav ü Şirîn (1180), one of the five great "treasures" of the great Persian poet Nizâmî (b. ca. 1138-1140/d. ca. 1174-1222).⁴⁷ The reworking of great earlier epic works was one of the standard tests of the skill of a great literary figure, and just as Nizâmî had reworked earlier themes, others such as Fuzuli and Navai would continue this same tradition later. Qutb's version therefore was neither a slavish translation nor an effort that is to be viewed negatively. Qutb himself notes

⁴¹ For the publication of the facsimile and text of the only extant manuscript (copied in Egypt) see A. Zaja, czkowski, *Najstarsza wersja turecka Husräv u Şirin Qutba*, i, Prace orientalistyczne 6 (Warsaw, 1958). The text has also been published in an edition by M.N. Hacıeminoğlu, *Kutb'un Husrev ü Şirin'i ve dil hususiyetleri* (Istanbul, 1968). See also Eckmann, "Die kiptschakische Literatur. I: Die Literatur von Chwarezm und der Goldenen Horde", pp. 280-285.

⁴² For publications of the text of this work see A.M. Şçerbak, *Oğüz-nâme—Muxabbat-nâme. Pamyatniki drevneuygurskoy i starouzbekskoy pis'mennosti* (Moscow, 1959); T. Gandjei, "Il 'Muḥabbatnâme' di Horazmî", *Annali dell'Instituto Universitario Orientale de Napoli*, N.S. 6 (1957), pp. 131-161; N.S. 7 (1958), pp. 135-166; and Ė.N. Nadjip, *Xorezmi. Muxabbat-name* (Moscow, 1961). See also Eckmann, "Die kiptschakische Literatur. I: Die Literatur von Chwarezm und der Goldenen Horde", pp. 285-287.

⁴³ For the publication of the text of this work see *Nehcü 'l-feradis. Uştmahlarning açuq yoli (Cennetlerin açik yolu)*, ii: *Metin*, ed. János Eckmann et alia, Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları 518 (Ankara, n.d. [circa 1988?]). See also Eckmann, "Die kiptschakische Literatur. I: Die Literatur von Chwarezm und der Goldenen Horde", pp. 287-291.

⁴⁴ See Qutb/Hacıeminoğlu: 191-195.

⁴⁵ See *The Golden Horde: Economy, Society, and Civilization in Western Eurasia, Thirteenth-Fourteenth Centuries*, Introduction and Chapter 8 for a more detailed discussion of "Golden Horde" and other names for this state, as well as the significance of Qutb's statement.

⁴⁶ See Xorezmi/Nadjip, text p. 35/trans. p. 77; see also pp. 15-16.

⁴⁷ See Nizâmî, trans. Henri Massé, *Le roman de Chosroès et Chirîn* (Paris, 1970).

that the purpose of this work was to translate the Persian language of the work in the name of his xan.⁴⁸ His version elevated the Turkic language of the Golden Horde to a literary standard following the orthographic conventions first established in the 11th century under the influence of the Uyğur literary language (though with certain linguistic changes). It also relied on metric forms used first in the earlier "Qaraxanid" literature of Balasağun.⁴⁹ This work further reflects a close familiarity with, and perhaps even a fancy for, Persian high culture at the court of the Golden Horde. This can also be seen from the mysterious toponym *Gülistan* mentioned earlier, since this was the title of the well-known Persian work, Sa`dî's *Gülistân* ("Rose Garden"). This same work was later reworked by Seyf-i Serayi, a native of Saray, as the *Gülistan bi-t-türki* in Mamlük Egypt in 1391.⁵⁰ It has survived in a 14th century copy made by a Kipchak in the service of a ruler in Anatolia.

Although the content of this work has been ignored in all studies of this period except for those devoted exclusively to literature, there are many important statements in this work that diverge from Nizāmî's original text and reflect the author's experience in the Golden Horde beyond just the dedication of the work to Tınıbek Xan and his wife. Most works of this sort begin with a profession of the greatness and unity of God, followed by the positive characteristics of the Prophet Muḥammad, and praise of the four companions of the Prophet (also known as the four orthodox caliphs, referring to Abū Bakr, `Umar, `Uṣmān, and `Alī). Qutb's praise of the four companions (*resūl`aleyhi s-selamnuḡ tört yarı ögdüsü*) describes them as the four heads of affairs (*tört iş başı*) who would look after the Prophet and carry out all of the desires that the Prophet expressed, and that together they could enter the seven climes.⁵¹ I would argue that this work is offering in its own way a precedent or religious explanation/rationalization of the relationship between the xan and the four tribal leaders, a political system I have described elsewhere.⁵² Perhaps it can even be seen as a religious prescription for the tribal leaders continuing their loyalty to the xan.

We may note several other interesting changes which Qutb introduces over Nizāmî's version. One is the organization of society before the xan. First were all the beys, second were the warriors (*bahadurs*), third were the wealthy, fourth were the poor, fifth were the needy, followed at the end by the countless slaves, plus others. A comparison with Nizāmî's original reveals that Qutb understood who his patrons were.⁵³ In a similar vein, it is the *ulus* beys, the wives of the ruling elite (the *xatuns*) and the notables of the land that are seen as spreading wealth, which may have also had the character of a suggestion! These members of the elite are not mentioned in Nizāmî's original version, nor would we expect to find them there.⁵⁴ Finally, whereas Nizāmî's description of a banquet includes foods that would be familiar to his own audience, Qutb's version refers to the sacrifice of cows, sheep, horses, geese, chickens, and ducks for his version of the banquet.⁵⁵ In this manner Qutb's inclusion of these and other details

⁴⁸ Qutb/Hacıeminoğlu: 195.

⁴⁹ See Bombaci, *Histoire*, pp. 96-97; and Eckmann "Die kiptschakische Literatur. I: Die Literatur von Chwarezm und der Goldenen Horde", pp. 280-285

⁵⁰ For the publication of the text of this work see Säyf-i Sarayi, ed.-trans. A. Bodrogligeti, *A Fourteenth Century Turkic Translation of Sa`dî's Gulistân (Sayf-i Sarāyî's Gulistân bi-t-turki)* (Budapest, 1969).

⁵¹ Qutb/Hacıeminoğlu: 190-191.

⁵² See U. Schamiloglu, "The *Qaraçı* Beys of the Later Golden Horde: Notes on the Organization of the Mongol World Empire", *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 4 (1984), pp. 283-297; "Tribal Politics and Social Organization in the Golden Horde", Ph.D. dissertation (Columbia University, 1986); and *The Golden Horde: Economy, Society, and Civilization in Western Eurasia, Thirteenth-Fourteenth Centuries*, Chapter 5 for a more detailed discussion of this system.

⁵³ Nizāmî/Massé: 143; Qutb/Hacıeminoğlu: 350-351.

⁵⁴ Qutb/Hacıeminoğlu: 421.

⁵⁵ Nizāmî/Massé: 145; Qutb/Hacıeminoğlu: 352.

informs us about his time and place, while at the same time lending additional evidence to the argument that this was a work supported by the patronage of the xan and written with a conscious awareness of how the court might react. In other words, the xan and his court understood a poetic language that was not identical with the vernacular of the time, could appreciate Persian literary genres, and follow the storyline set in ancient Iran. There can be no doubt that this was, indeed, a high culture.

While Qutb's *Xusrev ü Şirin* was not totally devoid of moralistic and religious lessons for the court, this was not the purpose of that work. A very different kind of literature is represented by the *Nehc ül-feradis*,⁵⁶ which was intended as a pious work. Already in the 19th century Şihâbeddin Mârcani described a manuscript of the *Nehc ül-feradis* (now lost) copied in Saray in 749/1358. That manuscript attributed the work to one Mahmud born in Bulğar, who found refuge in Saray, and whose family name (*nisba*), Kerderî, linked him with the city of Kerder in Xwarezm. Another manuscript says that the author died three days after March 25, 1360. The manuscript edited by Eckmann et al. was completed on 6 Cumādā I, 761/March 25, 1360, indicates the various sources on which it was drawn, and finally refers to the author as Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Xusräv el-Xorezmi.⁵⁷ This work is divided into four parts of ten chapters each. Part I, "The Positive Characteristics of the Prophet Muḥammad", is a detailed account of his life, the revelation of Islam, the Hicra from Mecca to Medina, the miracles surrounding his life, his return to Mecca, the Prophet's ascent to heaven in a dream, an explanation of heaven, the battle of Huneyn, and his death. Part II, "The Positive Characteristics of the Orthodox Caliphs, the Prophet's Family, and the Four Imāms", includes accounts of the first four caliphs (Abū Bakr, `Umar, `Utmān, `Alī), the Prophet's wife Fāṭima, the two sons Ḥasan and Ḥusayn of `Alī (who are seen as martyrs by the Shi`ites), and the imāms who founded of the four major legal schools (the greatest imām Abū Ḥanīfa, imām Şāfi`ī, imām Mālik, imām Aḥmad Ḥanbal). Part III, "An Explanation of the Virtuous Deeds Bringing One Close to God" explains the virtues of praying five times a day, giving alms, fasting during Ramaḍān, making the pilgrimage to Mecca, treating parents with respect, eating religiously-pure (*halāl*) food, proper etiquette (including distinguishing good from evil), devotion at night, and patience and contentment. Part IV, "An Explanation of the Evil Deeds Distancing One From God", explains the evils of spilling blood unjustly, fornication, drinking alcoholic beverages, haughtiness, lying, loving this world, hypocrisy and dissimulation (*riyā ve sem`a*), malice and envy, hubris and neglect, and the hope of a long life.

How should the character of this work be understood? I would suggest that the contents of this work reveal it to have been a work of an orthodox Sunnī character simply describing the basic knowledge and precepts that one needs to be a good Muslim. It includes balanced information on all the Muslim legal schools, reflecting the composition of Sunnī legal scholars in the cities of the Golden Horde as described by Ibn Baṭṭūṭa as we have already seen. If I may judge based on the recent publication of handbooks for Sufi orders in this period,⁵⁸ this work was not specifically designed for a *murīd*, an aspirant in a Sufi order. The existence of both traditions begs the question of whether there might have been any tensions between these two separate views of religion. After all, orthodox Islam was apparently dominant in the cities of the Golden Horde along the Volga, while in Xwarezm and elsewhere in the south there was a strong Sufi tradition that had even served a prominent role in the conversion of Berke Xan to Islam. We cannot know whether the *Nehc ül-feradis* was intended to serve as an educational purpose or if it was simply a pious act on the part of the author. There is one further observation that I would offer in this regard, namely that there was an increase in a desire to learn about how to get to

⁵⁶ See *Nehcū 'l-ferādis. Uştmaḥlarning açuq yolu (Cennetlerin açık yolu)*, ii: *Metin*, ed. János Eckmann et alia, Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları 518 (Ankara, n.d. [?1988]).

⁵⁷ Bombaci, *Histoire*, p. 95; *Nehcū 'l-ferādis*/Eckmann et alia, p. 309.

⁵⁸ See Waley, "A Kubrawī Manual of Sufism".

heaven, if we may recall the subtitle to this work. This could be a function of the fact that the number of converts to Islam was increasing. As will be discussed in the next chapter, however, this was also the period of the ravages of the Black Death through the territories of the Golden Horde. As in Western Europe, the Black Death must have had a profound impact on society in these territories as well. In Western Europe, one of the responses was an increased religiosity, a greater concern with death and the punishments brought down by God in art and literature. There is no doubt in my mind that the population of the Golden Horde had many reasons to be concerned about whether it got to heaven or not, and that this work was connected with that fear.

What I have offered above is a rather brief and incomplete survey of the rise of an Islamic Turkic high culture in the Golden Horde. A closer examination of these works beyond what I have described – especially a comparison of the contextual information offered by Ibn Baṭṭūṭa with the content of the *Nehc ül-feradis* – can offer significant insights into what Islamic doctrine and practice might have been in the Golden Horde. The Volga Bulḡarian tombstones offer their own contribution to our understanding of what Islamic practices were like in the Middle Volga region. Taken together, it is a powerful statement of the Islamic Turkic cultural synthesis that was achieved in the territories of the Golden Horde in the 13th-14th centuries before the arrival of the Black Death. As I have tried to show, this synthesis was of tremendous importance from point of view of the development of both Islamic and Turkic civilizations.

At the same time, the picture of the Islamic Turkic culture of the Golden Horde that I have offered above could not be further from the situation described in Devin DeWeese's *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde*. It cannot be my goal here to offer a critical review of this work, but I believe it would be appropriate to highlight several crucial methodological issues that are raised by this work. The first is that DeWeese's work treats "not 'what happened', but 'what people say happened'",⁵⁹ and considers "the available 'historical' accounts on the 'event' that is the subject of our conversion narrative, the 'winning' of the ruler Özbek Khan to Islam. We will then discuss the 'new' source that provides our conversion narrative".⁶⁰ In other words, the powerful lens of his critical inquiry focuses exclusively on the history of the story of the conversion of Özbek Xan, the context offered by native religion, the involvement of Sufi orders, and its subsequent cultural artifacts.

Second, because of this focus, DeWeese's work does not include a narrative description of Islam as a religious phenomenon within the Golden Horde (except the act of conversion of its rulers). Even though it includes a detailed overview of the political history of the Golden Horde in the 13th-14th centuries, considers the "'presence' of Islam in the Jöchid *ulus*",⁶¹ and extends as far as collections of oral literature from the 19th century, it does not consider any of the cultural products of Islamic Turkic civilization in the Golden Horde. For this reason DeWeese cites Eckmann's article on the literature of the Golden Horde only once,⁶² nor does he find it appropriate to include a consideration of the *Nehc ül-feradis* or the major edition of it published since Eckmann's article (1964).⁶³

Third, DeWeese focuses on conversion narratives that are clearly linked to the traditions of the Sufi orders. Although there is ample contemporary external evidence that the Sufi orders were actively involved in such activities, the conversion narratives that DeWeese studies are arguably of later origin. One of the questions that remains unanswered and requires further study is whether such narratives are historical in origin, or whether they are simply

⁵⁹ DeWeese, *Islamization and Native Religion*, p. 12.

⁶⁰ DeWeese, *Islamization and Native Religion*, pp. 14-15.

⁶¹ DeWeese, *Islamization and Native Religion*, p. 130.

⁶² DeWeese, *Islamization and Native Religion*, p. 70 n. 4.

⁶³ Prof. DeWeese is no doubt aware of this work, since I presented him with a copy of it in 1988.

elaborations or even inventions which serve the interests of the later Sufi orders.⁶⁴ While historians of religion accept such later sources at face value, this cannot be acceptable to the historian, for whom such sources introduce anachronism and ahistoricity when not handled properly (including dismissal if necessary). DeWeese's work raises for the historian as many questions as it proposes to resolve, but it does offer many useful insights for those who wish to consider the the works written by Muslims in the Golden Horde as primary sources for the study of Islam in the Golden Horde.

⁶⁴ Unfortunately such an argument remains outside the scope of the present essay.